While Mercury thermometers/sphygmomanometers used traditionally for measuring body temperature/blood pressure, have been replaced in some countries due to environmental concerns, there are also concerns in many countries about the availability, affordability and accuracy of alternative devices. At present there is no proposal to phase out the use of mercury based instruments in Government Hospitals as also in private health facilities.

Medical plants in the country

†1458. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have details of species of medicinal plants and their numbers found in the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that the medicinal plants which are found in the Himalayan regions are being taken out of the country illegally; and

(c) whether Government have any proposal to open research centers for medicinal plants in the Himalayan region, Darjeeling and Sikkim?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) As per available reports, it is estimated that there are about 8000 plant species having medicinal properties.

(b) There are no such reports.

(c) There is no such proposal. Government has set up a Task Force on High Altitude Medicinal Plants to deal with various issues related to development of these plants.

Pesticides and hormones in eatables

1459. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the growing use of pesticides in crops and hormone injections used to keep the produce fresh have increased the poisoning risk;

(b) whether it is also a fact that according to environmentalists, the content of pesticides in our fruits and vegetables far exceeds the permissible limits and his Ministry has failed to curb the growing use of pesticides in crops; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to contain the use of pesticides and injectable hormones in crops, fruits and vegetables?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) The pesticides, if used indiscriminately on crops may be a risk of health. However, it is essential for controlling the pests and diseases in crops. In order to ensure that pesticides used are safe, the Ministry of Health and F.W. prescribes maximum residue limits (MRLs)

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.